

While 92% of girls believe anyone can acquire the skills of leadership, only 21% believe they currently have most of the key qualities required to be a good leader (Schoenberg, Salmond, Fleshman 2008, 14).

The perception of girls and women as leaders reflects the gender gap appearing in many different forms of leadership. Gender roles are a social construction; society has developed a set of rules for how each gender should act. In the United States, the gender gap is decreasing in education and the workforce; however, the gap persists, especially within leadership roles. Women gained the right to vote 97 years ago; nevertheless the United States has yet to have a woman President and women hold less than 20% of seats in congress (Pew Research Center 2015). This lack of women in leadership roles, leads to a lack of representation of half of the population and differing viewpoints.

Girls and women are often not viewed in society as strong leaders, not only by boys and men, but by themselves as well. In order to break away from this societal view of only men are capable of being strong leaders; society needs to become aware of these perceptions of women leaders. The existence of the gender gap in society is well documented in a number of studies. The next step to raising awareness and lessening the gender gap is to break down the social construction and look at how and why the gender gap exists.

Connections between biases and perceptions of women leaders have aided in remaining the gender gap. A fear exists within many girls of not being liked, if they were to take on leadership roles (Schoenberg, Salmond, Fleshman 2008, 19). This fear is just one aspect of girls' leadership bias. Adults have also been shown to have a bias toward women

leaders. Perception of women leadership is contributing to the lack of women leaders. 53% of the public, both male and female, believe that women, in the foreseeable future, will not be able to obtain as many top executive business positions as men (Pew Research Center 2015). In uncovering the details beyond how the social construction of women leaders has emerged, solutions can be found to further diminish the gender gap.

The studies used concern the perception of women in leadership from a younger view point and an adult view points, as well as a look into the current gender gap discrepancies. Data sources used include: the Pew Research Center Survey, Girl Scout Research Institute Report, Making Caring Common Project, The Full Participation Project, and KPMG Women Leadership Study.